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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit on citizenship education examines some voluntary associations which Americans join to accomplish certain objectives. The purposes of the unit are to show students how associations take positions on certain issues, such as reforming Congress or amnesty, and how they work to effect governmental policies. It is hoped that students can draw conclusions about these groups. Then, they can become more effective members of the groups they join because they can better analyze a group's purposes, operations, and effectiveness. After briefly discussing the historical background of voluntary associations, political participation and power, four specific organizations are reviewed: League of Women Voters, Common Cause, American Legion, and Friends Committee on National Legislation. Based on the fight for women's right to vote, the League educates its members about issues, takes consensus positions and oversees its interest in government proceedings, and works for improvement in local government. Common Cause is a growing citizen's lobby group which monitors Congress and federal agencies to cause legislative reform. The American Legion recruits veterans of American wars and effectively influences legislation pertaining to veterans and radicalism, but it is losing its clout due to changing values and attitudes. The influential Friends Committee, a small association based on Quaker morality, takes positions on issues of Congressional reform and amnesty. (Author/ND)

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STUDENT BOOK

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PROCESS

by

MAUREEN S. SHEEHY

SP009473

Dr. Mark M. Krug, Editor

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PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that the Charles and Lavinia Schwartz Citizenship Project is publishing the unit by Maureen Sheehy on The Voluntary Associations and the American Political Process.

The role of the voluntary associations, like the League of Women Voters, the High Sierra Clubs, the American Legion, Americans for Democratic Action, the Birch Society, Common Cause and others in American politics and their influence on the policies pursued by the President, on the laws passed by Congress and the decisions of the Supreme Court has long been neglected in the teaching of government and civics in high schools. One looks in vain in the textbooks and curriculum syllabi for a thoughtful discussion of this important topic.

Oscar Handlin who wrote extensively about the voluntary associations maintains that they are indispensable to the orderly functioning of our two-party system.

Mrs. Sheehy, a veteran high school teacher, and social studies educator has thoroughly researched the history, aims, objectives and modes of operation of a representative group of voluntary associations and the students and teachers will undoubtedly find this curriculum unit informative and stimulating.

Mark M. Krug, Editor

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The history of democracy is a history of progressive inclusion*."

It is a widely held belief that it is the duty of American citizens to vote in local, state and national elections. Why do some citizens go beyond voting to other forms of participation in political affairs? Since the days of the Founding Fathers, Americans have been urging each other to take a more active part in government and public issues.

Representative democracy is based on the assumption that the people elect, at stated intervals, their representatives who perform the legislative and executive tasks of government. Government of, for and by the people does require an alert citizenry but it does not require that individual citizens take responsibility for detailed administration. In a democracy like ours, elections are most important because they provide the electorate, the people, the opportunity to render its judgment on how their chosen representatives have done their jobs. The voters either retain the incumbents or choose new officials.

In terms of mass participation, a Presidential election draws, by far, the largest number of voters to the polls. Elections held in non-presidential years and elections for city or state offices draw considerably less attention.

"Only about 4 or 5 percent are active in a political party campaign and attend meetings. About 10 percent make financial contributions. About 13 percent contact public officials. Around 25 or 30 percent try to convince others to vote a certain way, and 40-70 percent perceive political messages and vote in any given election."**

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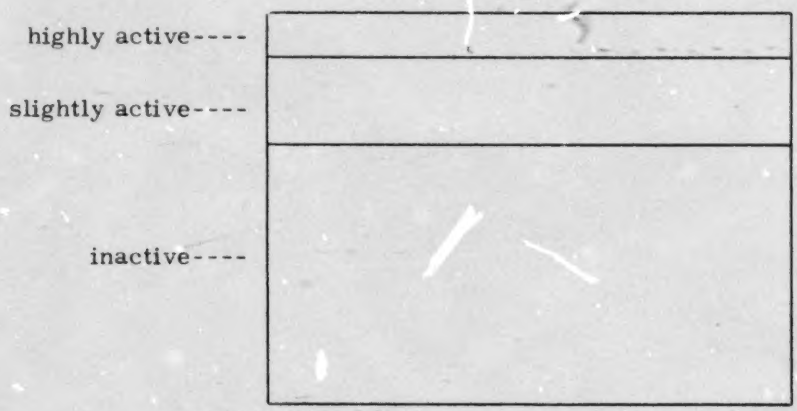
*Inclusion--the act of including; being counted in. All definitions in this unit are taken from Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company), 1968.

**V. O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups (New York: Crowell, 1958), pp. 3-4.

The electorate is stratified: a thin layer of highly active participants, a thicker layer of those who sometimes do a little campaign work or talk about politics with their neighbors, and an extremely thick layer of those who are politically inert or nearly so.



A small number of people account for a large proportion of the activity. Who are these activists? How do they differ from the rest? In recent years political scientists have attempted to answer some of these questions.

In general, the more highly educated parts of the population have higher rates of participation than the less educated. Since year by year the educational level of the average American has increased, it makes sense to predict more participation in the political process in the future. It is also generally true that those with higher status occupations are more politically active than those with lower status occupations.

The reasons for this are rather obvious. Better educated people who also enjoy higher incomes have the access to sources of information about political events and happenings. They also have the time to participate in political rallies and can much more easily take time to vote. They also might have a sense of power and control over their own lives that a poor person may not have.

In a free society, citizens participate in politics because they want to. But they have to be interested in the political process and that degree of interest differs in various groups or classes of people or even in various geographic areas. Throughout our American history there has been a strong element of

voluntarism. You have heard the expression "if you want something done, do it yourself." From the inception of American history, Americans have been "joiners." They joined to fight crime, to improve their schools, to celebrate special events, to help the poor and needy, to improve prison conditions or to press Congress or state legislatures to pass special laws.

This book is about ways in which Americans join groups today to accomplish certain objectives. A word of caution: many citizens are indifferent to politics all their lives. Their lack of interest is a very significant factor because it strengthens the power of those who do take part. From time to time some politicians have attempted to speak for the "silent majority." Did you ever stop to think of how they knew what was on the silent ones' minds?

GROUPS AND POLITICS

A good citizen can act in many ways to effect his government: He can vote, write letters to his representatives, keep himself informed on current issues. But these are all acts he does as an individual. A person's political behavior is learned from those around him. Individuals learn from their parents, friends, classmates --not only facts but they learn their attitudes, values and beliefs from the people with whom they are in contact. They develop certain attitudes toward free speech, police protection, welfare, legislation, and so forth.

Group members tend to have similar values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, an interested group that sends a representative to Washington to make its views known to the Congress are like-minded individuals at least about one thing--whatever is the purpose of the group. Sometimes it is a common occupation which binds the group members, such as the United Automobile Workers. Others, such as the League of Women Voters and Common Cause, have "good government" interests at heart. They work for a higher level of individual participation in political activities, equal rights for all, better working conditions, etc.

There are many advantages for people who want the same things to join together to satisfy their demands. Can you think of some?

(1. Elected officials are impressed by numbers.

2. Groups may have more resources such as money, prestige, knowledge. Knowledge about the issues involved, knowledge of how to get things done.)

Differences Among Group Members

You have all been in a group at some time--trying to get a job done. What are some of the differences in the behavior of group members?

(1. Some are leaders, some not.
2. Some participate a lot, others don't.
3. Some are interested, some not.)

Can you think of why this may be so?

(1. Individuals have many interests and the amount of time and resources available is limited. For example, the disinterested group member may be very tired because he just finished a hard game of basketball. The leader of the group may have prepared her comments before coming to the meeting.
2. Different individuals have different feelings regarding the topic. Some people have very strong feelings about population control. Others care little about the issue but are turned on by the issue of police brutality.
3. Individuals join groups for a variety of reasons. Their main purpose may or may not be the primary goal of the group. What might be some of these other reasons? [prestige in being a group member, making business contacts, sociability, time fillers, diversionary activity])

Large and Small Groups Are Effective in Politics

Lewis A. Froman, Jr., in People and Politics makes the point that cohesiveness of groups is a factor that helps to explain why some small groups are more effective in politics than others. Cohesive groups have a greater proportion of the group membership sharing common group goals and the intensity of interest is likely to be high. So therefore participation is likely to be high. They can be persistent and vocal making their views known to the decision makers in no uncertain terms.

Large groups and small groups are both effective in politics. Large groups have the advantage of numbers, small groups have the advantage of cohesiveness.

Large groups find it difficult to take positions on issues that will be satisfactory to all the members. Their stands will necessarily be broad, general and vague.

This unit describes the activities of both large groups and the Friends Committee on National Legislation, a small group of 200 members.

We have talked a bit about who takes part in politics--now we shall discuss why. To put the matter simply, people may take part in political happenings because they feel they ought to. They vote because it is their civic duty. They participate in other political activities because they feel obligated to do so. Sometimes this sense of obligation has been developed in civics courses. Students are seldom taught that they should participate in politics when their own interests are at stake in some specific contest. Nor are students taught that they should select among alternative opportunities for action such as national versus state politics, campaign work versus between-election petitioning. Many students come away from a course in government feeling that they should do their part, but they have no awareness of particular problems that their participation might help solve.

This book describes the activities of several political organizations which have considerable influence on our government. They often influence the actions of the President, the laws passed by Congress and even the decisions made by the Supreme Court.

One cannot discuss political action without discussing the concept of Power. Power is held or shared by people or institutions; those who hold power in a democracy get this power from the people. But while they hold the power, during their term of office, they may use it for good or evil. But, if they are wise, they watch to see what their constituents think of their use of power. The powerful in a democracy are, as one famous political scientist puts it, "empowered, dependent upon a continuing stream of empowering responses" from the citizenry.*

The people who make decisions have as a rule the power to make them. Those who have no power, seldom make decisions. Things just happen to them. They may react negatively to a decision made for them or they may accept the decision as a good one. Sometimes, groups of people in our country, usually the poor and the disadvantaged, feel left out of the entire decision-making process.

Some groups have, in recent years, used the slogan, "Power to the People." This idea in a democracy seems to be a good one, provided that the people are given the opportunity to use that power wisely and for the public good. At any rate more and more people are "counting themselves in" on decision-making and that means

*V. O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups (New York: Crowell, 1958), pp. 3-4.

that more people than ever before are learning the skills of political participation.

This curriculum unit is presented in the hope that readers will better understand from the examples presented how voluntary groups can effect governmental decisions about certain issues. It will become clear that the influence of the American people organized into thousands of groups and associations often finds a positive response in the highest levels of our government. This may encourage more of our young people to join public-minded groups of their choice.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS*

The voluntary association appeared early in American history; churches, universities and banks adopted patterns of voluntary associations which had European roots. The prevailing political pattern in Europe was that all groups, regardless of their nature or size were under the authority of the ruling person or group, and only the disadvantaged remained apart.

However, in colonial America many groups had already organized without the grant of a charter. Since the granting of a charter was the way the ruler could control a group, voluntary associations were formed without legal permission and therefore were able to avoid such control. By 1770 many organizations were thriving without a charter; men learned to do without it.

However, after the American Revolution, the states granted many charters without discrimination among applicants. When Massachusetts established a new bank in Salem, it could hardly deny the same privilege to another town. These associations did not depend for their success on favorable connections with rulers as they had in Europe, but upon the ability to gain and manage effectively the support of their members.

Between 1770 and 1820, churches, schools, and various charitable, social and business organizations sought and secured incorporation (legal recognition) freely. The government surrendered the power to select among applicants, and the charter ceased to bring with it any exclusive privileges. After 1820, the growing diversity of American society encouraged every type of associational activity. The appearance of so many associations was due to increased immigration and to the increased ethnic diversity of the population.

People became aware of their difficulty in dealing with emerging social problems; consequently, they formed associations to provide security for their

*Much of this chapter is based on The Dimensions of Liberty by Oscar and Mary Handlin, The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961.

religious institutions and to provide for the contingencies of death, disease and poverty. Many people needed to identify with a group, hoping to relieve the adverse effects of their recent entry into American life. All groups, churches, mutual-aid societies, and fraternal orders helped the individual to have a sense of identity.

There have been frequent extensions of voluntary activity into matters considered governmental. At other times the government has moved into areas which were once considered private or voluntary. The readers should be able to provide examples of both these situations.

The decline of small-town living and the rise of urban centers expanded the individual's capacity to choose which associations he might join. By widening the range of choices available to the individual, the voluntary association increased his power to act and thereby increased his liberty.

By the middle of the 18th century, many Americans no longer accepted institutions or customs simply because of tradition or authority. They began to consider the social forms which had the most validity for their new country. The voluntary association became a crucial segment of the social life of many Americans. When they joined organizations, they extended their power, and as they met challenges involved in making their own decisions, they enjoyed the rewards of personal responsibility for their own lives. This was an important element in the American pattern of freedom. However, there were also heavy social costs to voluntarism; it often entailed waste, inefficiency and duplicated efforts.

Because of the economic depression in 1929, many Americans had to turn to the government for services which could not be totally supplied by voluntary associations. The voluntary associations were therefore relieved of some responsibilities such as the relief of the poor, and the education of the children; however, they extended their activities into other areas such as business, social services, and culture.

In summary, voluntary associations provided numerous choices for the individual through his own efforts without calling upon the government.

In The Dimensions of Liberty Oscar and Mary Handlin state that the capacity to act through non-violent means is a very important element in American liberty.

The freedom to form associations with others of like minds acts as a safety valve in the American political system. Extremist positions are often diluted by the mainstream of American politics. American citizens may and do form organizations to protect bald eagles, to fight abortion or to abolish the income tax.

Only a free society could tolerate such a wide range of autonomous activities as we have on the American scene. The necessity for accommodating them forces the government to exercise its power loosely and to tolerate collaboration efforts over which it has little control.

The ability of men to join in united endeavors for their own purposes is itself hostile to tyranny. In addition, the existence of often extreme voluntary groups allows the two major parties to adopt middle of the road, moderate policies.

It is not our purpose here to look at all voluntary associations, but rather to look at the role of voluntary associations in the American political process. For this purpose, the following organizations will be examined: The League of Women Voters, the American Legion, Common Cause, and in lesser detail the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

CHAPTER 3

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters is an interesting voluntary association to study, as more and more American women are becoming aware of the prevalent discrimination against them. Both males and females today should study the history of the suffragettes, women who worked for the right to vote. These were women who believed in equal voting rights for all individuals, and who were ultimately successful. Their long fight for women's right to vote ended in 1920 with the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which states:

1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State on account of sex.

2. Congress shall have power, by appropriate legislation, to enforce the provisions of this article.

The League of Women Voters grew out of that fight. The suffragettes knew very well that the right to vote in federal, state and local elections would not be easy to obtain. They had to work very hard for many years to influence both the legislators and the public that this would be a good thing for the nation.

Let us briefly look at some of the events which led up to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. The roots go far back in our history. In 1840, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met in London at the World Anti-Slavery Convention. Mrs. Mott was one of the eight American delegates who had been denied a seat because she was a woman, and Mrs. Stanton was the wife of a delegate. Together the two of them made a pact to start a women's rights movement in the United States.

Later, in 1848, the first Woman's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York; the most daring proposition to come out of this convention

was: "It is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."

In 1869, both the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association were founded. The object of the former was to achieve a federal amendment to the Constitution, and the object of the latter was to gain suffrage state by state. Six years later, in 1875, Susan B. Anthony drew up the wording of a constitutional amendment. "The right of Citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." As it finally evolved, this is the exact wording of the 19th Amendment as added to the Constitution 45 years later in 1920.

During the long fight for the right to vote, the two organizations had merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association--a tightly knit, politically wise and powerful organization. When victory was in sight, they made further plans. They saw a need to increase the effectiveness of women's votes by improving government. So within the N. A. W. S. A. the National League of Women Voters was formed to politically educate women--now that they had the vote. Carrie Chapman Catt, the League President, said: "The vote is won. Seventy-two years the battle for this privilege has been waged, but human affairs with their eternal change move on without pause. Progress is calling to you to make no pause. Act!"

However, women had worked not solely for the right to vote, but to achieve specific goals through the exercise of that right. So from the very beginning, the purpose of the League of Women Voters was to foster education in citizenship. They also urged their members to participate in political parties.

As stated by the League today, its purpose is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government."

Many early accomplishments are still practiced today. At the 1924 League Convention, the President, Maud Wood Park, noted that the League, using the structure set up by the N. A. W. S. A. was organized in 346 of 433 Congressional Districts. (Today there are Leagues in 399 of 437 Congressional Districts.) Countless demonstration classes to explain to the newly enfranchised women the proper way to mark a ballot and other technicalities of registration and voting were started in the League's first year.

Getting Out the Vote

In 1920, only 49% of potential voters, men and women, voted. The League conducted an intensive campaign to get out the vote. The result was a 1% increase in 1924--an insignificant result. The League recognized from this experience that Americans needed to learn more about political affairs, and to learn how to deal with them effectively. So, very early in its existence, the League found itself committed to helping make democratic government in the United States a success.

The League also learned early in its history that it was never enough to pass a law or set up a bureau in government. Enforcement, administration, and appropriations had to be watched. Determination, perseverance and patience were unfailing qualities of League members if the goal seemed worthwhile. In 1924 the League Program listed federal suffrage for residents of the District of Columbia. In 1948, the item was broadened to include home role. In 1960 it was still on the Program. *

Individual Liberty

The woman suffrage movement itself stemmed from belief in the importance of the individual citizen in a democratic society, as did the League's early work on the behalf of women and children. In 1924, the League began to study the issue of freedom of speech, then academic freedom. In the 1940's the Program dealt with preservation of civil liberties, in the 50's, "development of an understanding of the relationships between individual liberty and the public interest," and then came a statement "to provide the greatest possible protection for the individual."

How the League is Organized

When a member joins the League of Women Voters of the United States, she can study and work on local, state or national issues. A state League is composed of the local Leagues of a particular state.

National conventions are made up almost entirely of delegates from local Leagues. The delegates come to conventions informed about their local league's preference but they vote as individuals. Each local League is composed of units.

*The League's Program is a yearly agenda approved at a convention.

A unit is a small discussion group made up of individuals who form a natural group for various reasons--those who live in the same neighborhood, those who work in the daytime and must meet in the evening, etc.

What is the League Program? How is it Made? How Does the League Reach Consensus?

By examining these questions, we will see how the League makes decisions. The National Program takes a stand on issues selected by the biennial Convention of the League held in even numbered years in late April. The vote adopting the Program is only the final step in a painstaking process begun much earlier.

About nine months before a Convention, the national Board sends to all local and state Leagues "the first call to convention" with deadlines. Then, after discussing possibilities, suggestions are sent by the local League to the national Board. After careful consideration of these suggestions, a proposed program is worked out. The recommendation is measured against League principles and purpose, possibilities for effectiveness, woman power and available time.

The proposed program is sent back to the Leagues for discussion and changes may be effected. The modified proposal is then offered to the Convention for adoption.

Consensus

It is essential to note at the outset that the League takes a national position only on issues which local and state Leagues have had a chance to study. In addition, no position is taken unless it is evident that there is a wide area of agreement among the members.

Therefore, as in program-making, there must be a wide area of agreement based on cross section as to states, size and type of League, before the National Board reaches consensus.

The League is always trying to get more members and to solicit the expression of membership opinion. The local and state leagues have the responsibility to express their views to the national Board which has the ultimate responsibility of consensus. However, one opinion is not expected or desired. Those

who differ from a League position may express their opinions as individuals but not in the name of the League. The minority view in Leagues is encouraged and welcomed, and occasionally has ultimately become the majority opinion.

Membership

Any American citizen who agrees with the purposes of the League can be a member. Non-citizens, and those under 18 years old are classified as associate members. The by-laws were changed by the entire delegation at the national convention in May, 1974 to allow men to join the League. Although the League aims for diversified membership, it generally attracts white, well-educated suburban women who represent a wide range of politicai philosophies.

Finance

The League is financed through dues and contributions solicited from members, non-members, business and industry. It is felt that the League works in the public interest, performs a public service, and therefore deserves public support.

In order to protect non-partisanship, no contributions from candidates or political parties are accepted.

When there are sufficient funds, Leagues are able to carry out projects benefiting the community, such as providing Voters Service and well researched publications in addition to lobbying for the public interest.

Publications

Publications inform members of facts pertaining to certain issues and are distributed publicly. The Know Your Town booklets prepared by all local Leagues are usually the most complete studies of the community available to the public. Each member automatically receives three basic publications: The National Voter, the State Voter, and her local League Bulletin. Local Leagues often publish the results of their studies which have a reputation for being accurate, clear and comprehensive.

Voters Service

Voters Service is an on-going activity devoted to aiding citizens by giving them factual information on political parties, candidates, and issues. In addition, special projects to aid inner city citizens have resulted in courses in practical politics.

Pre-election activities include registration drives, factual information for voters, and "Get Out the Vote" efforts. Many Leagues provide a telephone answering service for the public's questions. Some provide practice in the use of a voting machine. Information about candidates, their voting records and their opinions on important issues, is published. Often "meet the candidates" evenings are popular, and are held in members' homes.

After an election, League members follow the voting records of elected officials, interviewing them and publishing this information.

Voters Service is one of the ways the League of Women Voters carries out its main purpose: citizenship training. It provides only factual information on issues, never advocating a particular position, even when the League has a particular position. It does not promote League Program items. These two functions of the League are kept separated.

Action--Woman Power

The League of Women Voters is not just a study group, it is an organization committed to informing members through study and discussion in order to take action in the public interest. Such action includes providing information, informing public opinion and supporting or opposing legislation.

Preparation for action begins when League programs--local, state and national, are adopted. League committees assemble facts, prepare bibliographies, and provide information on the subjects selected for study. Through unit meetings, general membership meetings, and League publications, the members learn the facts about the program items and form their opinions through discussion. Use of the media distributes the facts to the community and hopefully establishes an informed public electorate.

After consensus is reached, the League board at each level decides the timing and method of action on its own program items and a "Time for Action"

notice is often sent to members who write as individuals to League presidents in order to inform them of official League positions. Occasionally the League is criticized for not speaking out on a specific current issue, but it can't study all issues sufficiently to take action on them.

CHAPTER 4

COMMON CAUSE AND CONGRESSIONAL REFORM

Before discussing the issue of the seniority system, some background information on Congress is provided.

How Congress Works: The Committee System

Congress is made up of the Senate--two members elected from each state--and the House of Representatives--elected from districts based on evenly distributing the population. Congress is the legislative branch of government; since it would be impossible for each member of Congress to concern himself with all the information about a pending bill, the houses are divided into committees. A member may serve on several committees but he can be chairman of only one.

The division of such a large number of elected officials into committees makes a great deal of sense. The members of a certain committee can become real experts on matters such as land use, taxation or education. For this division of labor to be successful, however, each committee needs to reflect fairly the viewpoint of the entire chamber. Every member should have the opportunity to share in final decision-making, and no member's special interests should be allowed to override the public interest.

The committees are not equal in importance; two of the most important are the House Rules Committee which decides which bills will be considered, when, and under what conditions, and the Appropriations Committee which decides how the budget should be set up.

Because the House of Representatives is so large, members usually serve on only one major committee. Thus the "expert" develops over the years. This is the reason that the House so often prevails when the House and Senate differ on details of proposed legislation.

(Can you think of a reason why the "expert" may not be an advantage?)

The Senate Committees

Because the Senators do more debating than the representatives, the Senate Committees have less influence on the details of final legislation. However, their investigative work receives wide publicity and often is very influential. Committee work is important where the Senate has special responsibilities: treaty ratifications and confirmation of nominations. Each senator has many committee assignments. (There are more subcommittees than Senators!)

The seniority system means that the chairman of each standing committee* of the House and Senate shall be the member of the majority party with the longest continuous service on it. The good feature of this method of getting a chairman is that it minimizes the internal struggles for position and power.

The power of a standing committee to reject or "kill" a bill, by refusing to make recommendations to the parent body is an important one. Usually the actions of the standing committee are given tacit approval by the parent body.

The Chairman

The committee chairman controls his internal organization, determines the agenda of his committee, and how and when it will consider the bills coming before it. He writes the committee report on a bill, and often manages consideration of a bill when it comes up for general debate. He is in charge of conference committee activities and controls the professional staff employed by his committee. He can create or abolish sub-committees, delegate responsibilities or keep tight personal control.

Some say there are two main faults with the committee system: the way chairmen are elected, and the great power wielded by them.

Nader's Congress Project

Who Runs Congress?, a paperback by Ralph Nader, has as its purpose the reforming of Congress which he believes is the great American default.* Nader says that it has fallen under the domination of the White House and relentless special interests, because civilians have failed to involve themselves in its activities. He believes that Congress has "shackled" itself with inadequate

*default - failure to act; neglect.

campaign laws, archaic rules, the seniority system, secrecy, understaffing and grossly deficient ways to obtain crucial information.

In this study, the focus will be only on a single serious flaw: the seniority system. Through your understanding of how Congress works you will see that this is a very important issue.

The Origin of the Seniority System

"Yesterday's reform can petrify* into today's abuse."

The seniority system in the House of Representatives came into practice at the turn of the century; the power of the Speaker to appoint committee chairmen had led to an enormous concentration of power. A fairer way was sought. It was finally decided that the chairmen would be selected according to the length of service on a committee. But through the years seniority has been so tightly adhered to that committee chairmen include men notable for their longevity, not their ability. Because of this seniority system, many distinguished middle-aged citizens who might make great Representatives never become candidates. A fifty year old person contemplating running for a seat in the House might think he would never have a chance to be committee chairman because other men would continue to be chairmen for many years. The chairmen of the ten most important committees have served an average of thirty-one years in the House.

Fortune Magazine (January, 1973) pointed out that presently most chairmen come from districts that are safely Democratic. Most ranking minority members come from districts that are safely Republican. This arrangement does not necessarily produce the best or most responsive Congressmen. Besides the seniority system, the secrecy of committee work is under attack by congressional reformers.

Much of the work that takes place in Congress is done without the public being aware of what is going on. A number of states now have laws requiring that all public bodies including legislative committees admit the public and the press to its proceedings. No doubt the press, and the public too, would pay more attention if they could be present when crucial decisions are being made in the committee rooms. Who votes for what in committee may be much more

*petrify - to convert into stone; to make rigid.

important than who votes for what on the floor. To remedy this, Committee hearings could publish summary reports.

To support Congressional reform one should realize that Congress is neither corrupt, unresponsive, nor hopelessly inefficient; however, like any other institution, it needs periodic modifications to tighten up rules that invite abuse and to relax or discard other rules that impede action.

Common Cause and Congressional Reform

The 93rd Congress, which convened in January 1973, approved reforms that will make more basic changes in methods of operation than did all of the Congresses of the last twenty-five years.

Common Cause, the national citizens lobby* of over 270,000 members has played a crucial role in working with members of Congress to bring about needed reforms in the operation of the House and the Senate. When Common Cause was founded, it made Congressional reform a primary target--and most of the experts said, "Forget it! Congress will never reform itself." The experts may prove to be wrong.

The changes proposed by Common Cause include: a weakening of seniority in the House, a strong anti-secrecy proposal that will open up committee proceedings to public scrutiny, a basic modification of the parliamentary device known as the closed rule which has for three decades prevented the House from voting on the most important tax and economic issues of the day and a broadening of the decision-making apparatus of House Democrats, so that all members of the party will have a say in policy formation.

These changes could transform Congress, and the House in particular, from what Common Cause thinks is an unresponsive and ineffective body controlled by a few senior members into a lively legislative body in which the voices of all citizens can be heard and heeded. Though it may not happen, at least it is now possible!

But the changes didn't come about by accident. It took careful planning and more than two years of continual effort by reform-minded members of Congress, backed by the insistent pressure of Common Cause and its nationwide membership.

*group who frequents a legislative body to influence members to procure or prevent passage of a certain bill.

Common Cause began its efforts in the fall of 1970, focusing on the seniority system. In January 1971, Congress made modest changes in that system, but the great reforms lay ahead. In mid-1972, Common Cause began its preparations for the next round of the battle. It lobbied at the national conventions of both political parties for inclusion in the party platforms of planks* supporting congressional reform. The Democrats responded favorably, endorsing almost all of Common Cause proposals, including an end to the seniority system, and open committee meetings. The Republican convention did not adopt similar planks although a number of GOP delegates worked vigorously for their adoption. Preceding the congressional election campaign of 1972, Common Cause undertook a massive effort to get all candidates for Congress to declare themselves on the congressional reform issues. All over the nation, Common Cause members sought explicit commitments (or refusals) from candidates for both Senate and House. A majority of elected candidates pledged themselves to support anti-secrecy reform, and a majority of Democrats agreed to support modification of the seniority system.

Between the fall election of 1972 and the opening of Congress in January, 1973, Common Cause continued its pressure of those members of Congress who had not yet committed themselves to vote the reform bill. Based on this effort, Common Cause was able to announce in a January 4, 1973 press conference that majority support in fact existed in the House for the key reforms that were about to be considered.

But no institution reforms itself easily by efforts coming from within only. Changes in Congressional procedure have come about in the past mainly because of effective teamwork between reform-minded legislators and hard-hitting citizen lobbyist. In this case, Common Cause mobilized public opinion, with invaluable help from the media - to attack the seniority system and the practice, used particularly in the House, of voting for important measures without a roll-call. This custom, Common Cause asserts, allowed Congressmen to take positions on vital bills without the knowledge of their constituents. Thus on important issues, they were not accountable to the voters. In the view of Common Cause, the seniority system and the balloting behind closed doors cut down the effectiveness of Congress and lessened the confidence of the

*planks - articles.

American people in the legislative branch of the government. The following section provides an alternative to the seniority system as proposed by Common Cause.

THE SENIORITY SYSTEM

A Harris poll revealed that in the six-year period from 1965-1971 the percentage of the public which gave Congress a positive rating declined from 64 percent to 26 percent. Other studies confirm the finding. One reason for the estrangement of the American people from Congress is that they don't find Congress responsive to their needs. And a chief reason for the unresponsiveness is the seniority system.

Seniority: A Flaw in our Governmental System

Chairmen of committees of the U. S. Congress rise to their powerful posts by means of the seniority system. The criterion for selecting chairmen of the committees is not merit, not past performance, not representativeness of the majority will, but simple length of service.

The committee chairmen are those who keep being elected and re-elected. And that means, almost without exception, that they are from non-competitive, one-party states or districts. Some chairmen of powerful committees in Congress, are, according to the Common Cause literature, out of touch with the up-to-date trends in their party and the desires of the American people - even chairmen partly incapacitated by age or illness - have no difficulty in keeping their chairmanships.

John Gardner, President of Common Cause maintains that the seniority system is a barrier to accountability in our national government today. It frustrates a basic political right and responsibility: the citizen's capacity to call to account those who hold the levers of power. Seniority almost guarantees that there will be no national party unity in the Congress; that Congress's effectiveness in counter-balancing the Executive Branch will be hindered by the division of the national powers into baronial fiefdoms - the Congressional committees.

Committee chairmen are the power structure in Congress. Under the seniority system the chairmen exercise often decisive power over their com-

mittees. They can do almost as they wish on legislation - rewarding followers by agreeing to special provisions of law or dispensing subcommittee chairmanships, and punishing opponents by pigeon-holing* legislation or withholding appointments to subcommittees or House-Senate conferences. Some chairmen, of course, have a deserved reputation for fairness in dealing with proposed legislation and with the members of their committees.

Seniority enables Representatives and Senators to refuse to follow the wishes of the majority of their party in Congress. This is particularly so, since party discipline is very loose in American politics. A study made by the Democratic Study Group which was published at the end of 1970, showed that one of three House Democratic committee and subcommittee chairmen voted against the majority of their Democratic colleagues more frequently than did the average Republican member of Congress.

At present, many chairmen are not even accountable to their own constituents. While most of the men and women who represent the citizens of this country were first chosen in hard-fought, two-party contests, many chairmen of committees come from solid and "safe" Democratic or Republican areas. Most members of Congress if they are to be re-elected must be responsive to the needs and views of the constituents. However, many committee chairmen who usually come from one-party districts, or from traditionally Republican or Democratic states, face no significant opposition in either primary or general elections and often ignore the needs of the nation as a whole. For them, the healthy pressure to stay in touch with current problems is virtually nonexistent. Among the 53 House members who had no opposition in the 1972 elections were the Speaker of the House, the Majority Whip, five committee chairmen, one ranking minority member, and four subcommittee chairmen of the Appropriations Committee.

Common Cause's Alternative Proposal

The public as a whole will never be able to make the committee chairmen accountable without requiring them to stand individually before their fellow party members for election as chairmen. That is why Common Cause has proposed a very simple alternative to seniority:

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*pigeon-holing - to put aside for the present, especially with the intention of ignoring or forgetting.

Each individual committee chairman and subcommittee chairman must be elected at the beginning of each new Congress (every two years), or when a vacancy occurs, by open ballot of the full membership of the majority party of each House in Congress. Ranking minority party members should be chosen by the same procedure in the minority party caucus.

The most autocratic* of present chairmen would not behave as he does if he knew he must in two years or less stand individually before his fellow party members for election as chairman.

Common Cause also urges that the election of committee chairmen be by open ballot, which is the only way that those who do the electing can be held accountable to voters back home. Some say a secret ballot is necessary in voting for committee chairmen because the man who wins the chairmanship might later punish the members of his committee who voted against him. On the other hand, secrecy also hides political favor-swapping and deals. Freedom from reprisals is important but the citizens' right to know is also important. Like all complex issues, no easy solutions are available.

Seniority in the Next Congress

Most of the men who control Congress in 1974 were first elected in the 1930's and 1940's. The average age of all the Members in line to be House Committee chairmen is 65, which is 14 years higher than the average age of all members of the House of Representatives.

It is a bit more difficult to build up long tenure in the Senate. Few states are as completely dominated by one party as are the Congressional districts of the Key House Committee chairmen. Senators almost always receive at least some opposition to re-election. Nevertheless, Senate Committee chairmen average 20 years of service. The chairmen of seven of the most important committees (Judiciary, Appropriations, Commerce, Foreign Relations, Banking, Armed Services and Finance) all first came to the Senate more than a quarter of a century ago. It must be added here, that some of these Senators, including John Stennis of Mississippi, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and William Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee enjoy the respect of most of the Senators, regardless of party affiliation.

*autocratic - holding unlimited powers.

The Abuse of Power

According to Common Cause literature, there are many abuses of the power of committee chairmanships. For example, Senator James Eastland (D-Miss.), once carried a civil rights bill around in his pocket to prevent committee consideration, and on another occasion allowed a five-week filibuster in committee before forcing his committee to kill a bill as the price for permitting a vote on a federal judgeship.

Similarly, Common Cause asserts, Rep. Wayne Hays (D-Ohio) has been building an empire out of his chairmanship of the House Administration Committee, which has the power to cut the budgets and staffing of other committees and subcommittees. Hays has been chief mover in attempts to repeal valuable sections of the Federal Elections Campaign Act of 1971. His actions as chairman of the committee that oversees the administration of the Act by the Clerk of the House have consistently undercut the law. Hays authorized only 12 of 40 additional staff members requested by the Clerk, making it almost impossible for the Clerk to administer the law effectively. After Common Cause reported publicly that Hays had missed the filing deadline for his own campaign finance report, he instructed the Clerk to raise the cost of copies of the official reports from 10¢ to $1 per page - an action Common Cause successfully reversed by bringing legal action.

Another example of too much power given to a Committee chairman concerns Senator Russell Long (D-La.) who heads the powerful Senate Finance Committee, which, according to Common Cause, is overloaded with Senators who have close ties to special interests. Long, who has a heavy personal financial stake in the oil industry, believes that the oil depletion allowance must be retained. Apparently he sees no conflict between his personal financial interest and his duties as legislator. "It's not a conflict of interest," he wisecracks. "It's an identity of interest." Long's committee is so secretive that not even the staff of Finance Committee members are allowed into executive sessions. The Committee has no subcommittees! Finance, under Long's leadership, Common Cause asserts, is where tax loopholes get made rather than closed. The Senate Finance Committee, in the space of one week, gutted a pension reform bill that had been worked on for two years and had the unanimous, bipartisan support of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee

John Gardner and other leaders of Common Cause have often attacked Rep. Wilbur Mills (D-Ark.) who heads the House Ways and Means Committee. Mills runs the committee by "consensus," not permitting votes until he is certain the position he is prepared to support will pass. He is equally fearful of amendment on the floor of the House, and he typically requests and gets from the Rules Committee a "closed rule" which prohibits any floor amendment to his bills.

Each of these cases, among many, shows, according to Common Cause, how major areas of national policy can be frustrated by a single individual who is not held accountable, because of the seniority system.

Seniority's Virtue - "Stability" - "Experience"

There is, of course, another side to the issue of seniority. Many members of Congress and some academic experts on the workings of the American government say that the seniority system has, on the whole, worked well. They point out that it is the seniority rule that allows the chairmen of the committees to progress slowly through the ranks of the committee and in the process to acquire much knowledge and experience in the complex areas of defense, budget, foreign relations and others. They argue that most chairmen are men who serve with great ability and distinction and that the election of chairmen would be a temptation for political deals, for "logrolling." It may be that the reform would result in less able people rising to important chairmanships.

The debate on the seniority system is healthy and useful. Whether it will be abolished, as Common Cause demands is doubtful, but that some reform in this area is needed is quite apparent.

Will Congress Reform Itself?

Since changes have to be made from within, how can we expect reform? The answer is that on the whole Senators and Representatives are sensitive to public opinion. They don't like to admit Congress's faults, but they like even less the prospect of alienating large number of voters. And they are beginning to realize that for a great many Americans the seniority system has become a kind of symbol of inactivity and unresponsiveness in Congress.

Also most Congressmen are proud of being the representatives of the American people. They see themselves as the descendants of the great Americans who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. They do not want to be viewed as self-serving, rigid or incompetent. If enough Senators and Representatives acknowledge the necessity for seniority system reform, reforms in that area may be adopted by Congress. In fact, a beginning in this direction has already been made.

At the outset of the 92nd Congress (January, 1971), reform leaders of the House of Representatives, with the strong backing of Common Cause, scored a modest but significant victory in their fight against the seniority system. Both Democrats and Republicans in the House agreed that the party caucuses need not automatically follow the seniority system. The Democrats agreed that if a Representative challenged the nomination of a chairman and was joined by 9 others, a separate vote must be taken. The Republicans went further to require every ranking committee member of the party to stand for election individually as a matter of course. Neither party agreed to open the process of election of chairmen to public view; votes on committee chairmen will still be taken in secret sessions.

Another important breakthrough was the adoption, again at Common Cause's urging, of a seniority reform plank in the Platform of the 1972 Democratic National Convention. Both major platforms state that seniority rule has weakened Congress as an effective and responsive institution, and has "crippled effective Congressional leadership." The platforms called for an end to seniority as it had been used and they proposed a procedure similar to the one that Common Cause was advocating.

Common Cause notified its then 200,000 members of the approaching challenge to the seniority system. During the 1972 election campaigns, Common Cause members throughout the country asked their Congressional candidates to declare themselves on this issue. The tally of the results showed that a majority of Democrats in the House were prepared to fulfill their party platform promises to abolish or to modify the seniority system.

If there is so much criticism against the seniority system one may ask why has it lasted? Probably because it is possible to list as many arguments for the seniority system as against it.

Barbara Hinckley, in her Ph. D. dissertation entitled "The Seniority System," states that both leaders and ordinary members of Congress profit by the stability, predictability and maintenance of traditional power alignments which it fosters." In other words, they are familiar with it, they know how to deal with it, and it works.

Ms. Hinckley sees opponents of the seniority system as seeking a more centralized distribution of influence in Congress which would be more responsive to Presidential leadership. It is a fact that chairmen of committees who have succeeded to the chairmanships of the committees by seniority do not feel beholden to the President, even if he is from their party.

Her study suggests that changing the seniority system may well result in the election of inferior but popular Congressmen and Senators to the committee chairmanships. Elected chairmen, Hinckley says, may well feel obligated to those members who voted for them and that fact may greatly impair their independence and effectiveness. The seniority succession eliminates this potential danger

HOW COMMON CAUSE WORKS ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Mary Fulton, a young housewife and mother on Chicago's North Shore, was thinking about joining a local political group; she felt she had a little time to spend and wanted to feel like she was doing something to help the government. She wanted to be involved in some small way in making a better world.

She drifted along with these ideas, not knowing exactly what to do, when she saw a small article in the community newspaper: "Common Cause announces membership campaign in the 10th Congressional District."

She had heard of Common Cause, knew that it was a national citizens' lobby, and approved of what it was trying to do. The article listed names and addresses of the local steering committee* and suggested that persons interested in participating in various local activities contact any one mentioned. Mary picked out a name of a member located near her house and called Fred Jackson for further information.

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*Steering committee: a group of persons jointly making decisions, no member having an office such as president.

Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, July 2, 1974

Delighted with her interest, Fred agreed to discuss CC's future activities with her. She went over to his house for more information and Fred Jackson began by explaining his own interest in Common Cause. He said that the 10th Congressional District had over 2,000 members and explained that he was head of the telephone alert system which enabled citizens to raise a timely voice on current legislation. When a bill was being worked on in Congress which interested CC--such as reforming the laws about campaign financing--he received a phone call from the CC office in Washington, D. C. asking him to alert his district members that their Representative was considering voting on the issue. There were four people in this district who received such calls in this telephone alert system. Each called ten additional members who called their list of ten members, so that all could write, phone, or telegraph their representatives. This created pressure from citizens so that their opinions could be noted.

Mr. Jackson explained that he had worked with John Gardner, who had impressed him with his sincerity and political conviction. He heartily agreed that the Congress needed reform and he liked knowing that he could help in the accomplishment of such a task. He was an average citizen who wanted to join others to speak out.

"The national organization is supporting efforts to establish public financing of many campaign expenses. It also is in favor of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, and passages of tax reform legislation. And I'm in favor of those things, too.

"We're going to have a public forum in September with Rep. Samuel Young as our guest. The topic is campaign financing. We have a speakers bureau but most of our local activity is low-keyed. We stick to national issues, not local issues, which are usually the hot ones. And our membership drive is more concerned with people who are knowledgeable and politically aware. Our local members come from all walks of life, but share the common concern. Frankly, our group doesn't appeal greatly to young people because congressional reform is a rather difficult and technical topic to understand. It's harder to get hold of, than, say, a local issue of how the school board spends its money."

"Are there groups like this in all the congressional districts in the country?"

"No," replied Mr. Jackson, "but I wish there were. The more pressure we can put on Congress to do its job, the better off we'll all be." He concluded by noting that CC also has a speakers bureau, a public relations committee and a research group.

CONVERSATION WITH A CITIZEN:*

John W. Gardner

Introduction

The goal of John W. Gardner is to reform the political system. Throughout his life he has had a consistent concern: the potential for individual fulfillment. In 1938 he received a Ph. D. in psychology. Over the years, his ideas about how to get things done have changed, and so has his style. One of his greatest problems when he was a young public figure was that he had little appetite for the limelight, no dramatic sense. His speeches were thoughtful, but his delivery was dull. He had no knack for dealing with the press. His friends thought he would never survive the shark-infested politics of Washington, D. C. In the past few years Gardner has developed the ability to bind an audience to him, to stir it, scold it, amuse it. He is now one of Washington's most skilled utilizers of the press for getting ideas across. In political battles he can scheme and infight with the best - and worst - of them.

Gardner, at age sixty, is more relaxed and open than he used to be. But he still does something he has done for many years. He schedules time to think.

When he founded Common Cause in the fall of 1970, and said that its issues would be essentially procedural ones - the processes by which Congress functioned, the ways in which politicians' campaigns were financed - the public was very skeptical. After all, these issues had been around Washington for a long time. People thought nothing could be done about them.

In the summer of 1973 Common Cause had 220,000 members (compared to 155,000 members of the League of Women Voters) and has had an impact on several political battles on Capitol Hill. But the most important point about Common Cause is not the number of its members, its age, or battles it's won, but rather the idea of citizen action that lies behind it.

*Adapted from The New Yorker, July 23, 1973, by Elizabeth Drew.

Let us see how this organization fulfills his lifelong concern for unleashing human potential.

The Interview

I interviewed Gardner in his office on M Street in Washington. It is a plainly decorated, linoleum-floored office with photographs on the wall of James Bryant Conant, Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson, a cliff at Yosemite National Park, and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Gardner is tanned. As he talks he waves his hands expansively, or moves them in a molding fashion, as if he were really shaping his answer. He speaks slowly. I begin by asking him about his agenda for reform and its relationship to the Watergate affair.

"The agenda is about how to get responsive government, government that you can hold to account, government to which the ordinary citizen has access. All the Constitutional guarantees that have been violated by Watergate were attempts by our Founding Fathers to produce responsiveness, accountability, and access."

He thought that Watergate was a dangerous attack on our basic American rights. "Now that we know what was going on, there are several dangers. It's not just that we have to stay angry long enough to make changes so it will be impossible for it to happen again. We don't know if we will learn the wrong lesson and, in our confusion, reach out for even more dangerous leaders to whom we will give even greater power. Keep in mind that there's an element in our population that actually doesn't give a damn about the Constitutional guarantees endangered by Watergate. The problem is that in a time of economic panic, or military crisis, or political paralysis, the suspension of Constitutional guarantees might appear to be the best way to re-establish order. Watergate has raised some pretty tough questions about the American people: We let it happen. We let the corruption develop. The big question now is whether we have the will to take tough remedial measures. The danger of apathy is there."

"HOW CAN YOUR AGENDA OF REFORM PREVENT SUCH AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY?"

"We can't banish from politics those people for whom the end justifies the means, or those who deceive the public 'for the public's good.' What we can do is to make realistic arrangements that will make it more difficult for officials to keep

citizens from the levers of power, and more difficult for a tightly knit inner circle to monopolize those levers."

"SO YOUR PLAN INCLUDES UPDATING THE ARRANGEMENTS BY WHICH THE PUBLIC, IF IT CHOOSES TO BE VIGILANT, MIGHT BE ABLE TO HOLD ACCOUNTABLE THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THEIR HANDS ON THE LEVERS OF POWER?"

"That's right. It's more difficult today for a citizen to know what is going on. It's vastly more difficult for him to be heard. It's hard for him to know his leaders. We have to update the constraints on power."

"IT SEEMS THERE IS A THEME RUNNING THROUGH YOUR AGENDA: OPENING UP THE PROCESSES, OPENING UP INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC, WHETHER IT'S THROUGH DISCLOSURE OF CAMPAIGN FINANCING OR THROUGH DISCLOSURE OF CONTACTS OR LOBBYISTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OR THROUGH HAVING MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESS OPEN UNLESS THERE ARE STRONG REASONS TO HAVE THEM CLOSED. ARE YOU TRYING TO BREAK DOWN THE SECRECY WITH WHICH MANY DECISIONS ARE MADE?"

"Yes. People understand the power of money to corrupt the political process, but they understand less well the power of secrecy to corrupt that process. Accountability is at the heart of self-government. And there isn't any way for a citizen to hold his government to account if he doesn't know what is going on. What he doesn't know he can't object to. Secrecy cuts the link of accountability. Yet the bad habit of doing the public business in secret runs from the Congress of the United States right down to the state legislature and to the county board of supervisors where the chairman is handing a gravel contract to his brother-in-law. Meucher said, "Conscience is the inner voice which warns us that someone may be looking."

"DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT WE CAN CURB THE TENDENCY OF MONEY TO CORRUPT THE POLITICAL PROCESS?"

"The final answer is public financing of campaigns. In addition to campaign-financing laws, we need tough lobbying-disclosure laws and conflict of interest legislation. Congress's lack of enthusiasm for such legislation is bottomless."

"REFORM MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO DIE QUICKLY. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO KEEP YOURS ALIVE?"

"Any specific citizen organization will grow old and ineffective. The idea of citizen action will continue, and emerge in new forms. The type of citizen action we are tying to create is a new ingredient in the political process - highly organized, tough-minded citizen action to hold government continuously accountable, a means of voting between elections. The tasks of citizen action are never-ending. The battles are never over. Nothing is finally safe. There will always be issues of freedom and government."

"ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT A NEW DEFINITION OF THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN WHO CHOOSES TO BE INTERESTED?"

"Absolutely. Nowadays it's hard for individuals to understand the issues that affect their lives. They can't know what decisions are being made by some middle-level bureaucrat that will affect the way they pay their taxes or the way their children are educated. They need to organize with other citizens so that they can have the kind of information that will enable them to find the targets. They need to organize to know how to move in on those targets."

"IF YOU SUCCEED IN OPENING UP GOVERNMENT THERE WILL BE A STAGGERING AMOUNT OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO CITIZENS. WHAT WILL THEY DO WITH IT ALL?"

"Of course no one person or group will want to use it all. The environmentalist will use the information pertinent to his concerns. So will the civil-rights groups, the better government groups, the consumer groups, and so on. I think many citizen-action groups will spring up in special fields. They will have to become more skilled in the proven techniques of public-interest lobbying."

"WHAT ARE THESE TECHNIQUES?"

"The first requirement for effective citizen's action is stamina. They have to be strong to fight the special interest lobbies. The second requirement is an informed public. Officials respect citizen action when they discover that citizens are watching and the media are reporting what the citizens see. The third requirement is focused action. They must pick a few targets and mobilize strength numbers, and money in order to have an impact. The fourth requirement is a professional cutting edge. Citizens must be prepared to match professional skill and knowledge with their opponents."

"DO YOU THINK THERE ARE MANY CITIZENS WHO WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON - AND WOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT A SITUATION?"

"Nobody knows how many. A lot of people are very busy surviving. It's hard enough to pay your bills and get the kids off to school without worrying whether the House Ways and Means Committee is meeting in secret. I sympathize with that. But there are some people who have the time and energy to worry about the community and nation. They are in all parts of society so the channels of a free society have to be kept open so they can step forward and make themselves felt.

"Some good government movements of the past thought that once perfection was reached we could all sit back and be happy. But somebody always has too much power, somebody always has too little. If you drive the bad guys out of power the good guys who replace them will soon grow to love power and may abuse it. So the struggles never end. Old-style reform movements feel themselves to be above politics. But politics is the only forum in which we can resolve our differences. As long as equally worthy people have incompatible goals, somebody has to mediate. Politicans are our mediators. Politics is a kind of free market where we resolve conflicting purposes. It's always grubby.

"There are all kinds of politicans. There are some very good people in politics, and there are lots of unheroic types who will respond to pressures, good and bad. Citizen action tries to work with the good guys, stop the crooks and stiffen the spine of the unheroic."

"IN RECENT SPEECHES YOU'VE BEEN SAYING THAT WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND OUR VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS IN ORDER TO THINK ABOUT HOW THIS COUNTRY MIGHT CHANGE."

"Yes, the government can only channel what is already there in the way of motivation and values. Leaders don't invent motivations, they unlock them. There's a serious danger for any society that doesn't understand that there is a non-rational side of human nature. We have to believe in, and be moved by, something. We have to care about something. We have to have a sense of belonging, a sense of community. We need to be needed. We need to love and be loved. These are more important than the gross national product and what people think about revenue sharing."

"DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS A SET OF VALUES THAT WE AMERICANS AGREE UPON - OF SHARED BELIEFS THAT CAN GIVE US A SENSE OF DIRECTION?"

"There's no sense in trying to pretty up our history. There is a point in looking to see if there are some ideals or standards which might help us find our way into a better future. The idea of justice is one of the oldest values known to man. So is freedom, the dignity and worth of the individual. Though we have not lived up to those values they are statements of things that people would like to live up to. We value opportunity - the release of human potential."

"HOW DO WE GO ABOUT HAVING OUR GOALS BECOME REALITY?"

"We begin with systematic repair. Make it so an individual can hold his government accountable, so that it's responsive, so that he can have access to it."

The Opposite View

Read the following article to see an expression of an opposite view.

Is the dislike among moderate congressmen for social action groups justified?

What arguments do they have for their position?

How would you refute the argument?

What do you think of the validity of social action groups? Should they be modified or limited in some way?

CHAPTER 5

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Among modern American pressure groups, perhaps no other group has attained such recognition or had such effectiveness as the American Legion.

Founded in 1919 to answer the discontent widespread among soldiers in the interval between the end of World War I and demobilization,* the Legion was designed (1) to perpetuate the associations and assure the dominance of the ideals of war, (2) act as a bulwark against radicalism* and (3) protect the interests of injured veterans.

The decision to include all World War veterans whether they had served at home or abroad made possible the growth of the Legion until it had, during peak years, close to one million members.

Although the possible membership of the Legion constituted a cross-section of America, those who actually joined the organization were representative of the lower middle class, in economic interests, social attitudes and political outlook. The leaders, however, were generally more economically and socially privileged. Often the Legion almost dictated the government's policy regarding ex-soldiers. Relying upon the weight of the membership, the legislative committee of the Legion over the years perfected its technique in obtaining the passage of bills through Congress. Measures based upon resolutions passed by the American Legion National Convention were often framed by the legislative committee itself and introduced into the House or Senate by a selected legislator. This same legislative committee keeps a watchful eye upon its bills as they proceed through Congress. When the bills are being studied by certain Congressional committees, Legionnaires often appeared before the committees to help win the approval of the Congressmen.

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*demobilization - dismissal of troops

*radicalism - favoring extreme changes

An accurate check is kept upon the attitude of the representatives and senators toward Legion legislation, and doubtful Congressmen were often brought into line by a deluge of mail inspired by the Legion's legislative committee. With this simple technique the American Legion achieved a great deal of success.

Since this legislative committee depended upon the support of the entire Legion and the good will of the public to influence Congressmen to vote in favor of their measures, it needed to work closely with the Legion's publicity division.

The activities of the publicity division were aimed in two directions: one at members, a series of periodicals or pamphlets to acquaint Legionnaires with the attitudes of their organizations on controversial issues.

The other direction of publicity was to the public at large. They tried to use every opportunity so the public would have a favorable attitude toward Legion activities. Newspapers, magazines, the radio, all were supplied with carefully planned material. Thus, the organization used professional skill to maintain its membership and insure the success of its legislative program.

The most important part of this legislative program was to establish adequate care for the disabled. This included disability compensation as well as establishment of Veterans Administration Hospitals for the incurable. The Legion also sponsored a planned program of hospital construction designed to meet the needs of the disabled rather than the needs of political expediency.

It is a tribute to the Legion and to the Veterans Administration that veterans' affairs have been handled with a minimum of attention to politics and maximum attention to the problems of the disabled.

Second only to its preoccupation with the securing of benefits for veterans was the Legion's interest in protecting America from enemies at home and abroad. Legionnaires believed that radicals threatened national defenses with their pacifist teachings. In its attitude toward defense, the Legion has been called militaristic. It has denied the label and has claimed that the best way to maintain peace was through a strong defense.

It is probably in the area of the Americanism program that the American Legion has been most influential. Because it represents the middle-class, small town, small business group, the Legion has perpetuated the beliefs and ideals of

that group. It has expressed the individualistic, patriotic conservative philosophy held generally by its membership.

In attempting to make its American patriotism important, the Legion has entered many fields of activity. The one which has received the most publicity is the suppression of that which is "un-American"--attitudes which were never well defined. Many widely differing groups have been declared suspect by the Legion: labor organizations, churches, women's clubs, etc. The Legion supported bills which made it difficult for radical groups to propagandize. They also tried to exclude "un-American" people from living in the United States. They directed their policies against alien communists and fascists.*

The negative aspects of their activities against radicals must be balanced against the constructive phases of the Americanism program. They worked out a program, under the Americanism Commission, to appeal not only to veterans but to all young people. To keep alive the spirit of patriotism, the Legion sponsored public celebration of national holidays, advocated the "Star Spangled Banner" as the national anthem, and demanded a flag code and a campaign of flag education to instill respect for our nation's symbol.

There are some indications that for a variety of reasons the influence of the American Legion is slowly diminishing.

The following is a summary of an article from the Wall Street Journal, May 19, 1971.

The American Legion--Fading Away?

(Wall Street Journal, May 19, 1971)

The American Legion, once a powerful organization with clout ranging from Pennsylvania Avenue to Main Street, once a hub around which revolved so much of community social and civic life, now is fading in importance.

The Legion is trying to react, trying to preserve itself. Rock music plays in Legion Halls that once knew nothing more avant garde* than the polka. Legion officials personally visit the battlefield, trying to spur interest among

*fascists - people who believe in a governmental system with strong centralized power permitting no opposition, controlling all the affairs of the nation.

*avant garde - leading style; modern.

veterans-to-be, while at home Legionnaires armed with computer printouts from the Veterans Administration buttonhole the newly discharged. The Legion is muffling its hawkishness, its conservatism, and is considering liberalizing its membership standards.

Alfred P. Chamie, national commander, claims that 325,000 Vietnam era vets have already joined. On the face of it, the Legion appears to be growing a bit. At the end of 1970 its membership stood at just under 2.7 million--a net gain of about 150,000 from the low of 1964.

In 1946--the high point of Legion membership--more than 313 million were enrolled. As for the Legion's claim, a Washington source estimates that all but 25,000 to 50,000 were career servicemen just happening to be ending their service during the Vietnam war.

Members are showing less interest in Legion affairs. A large part of the problem is the nature of the war itself. Indifferent when they aren't bitter, many young veterans find little glory in having fought in Vietnam and less pride on coming home.

A young veteran in Los Angeles says, "I want to forget it. I don't want to be reminded of it." Another vet, now a college student, says, "it's absurd to think that this is another great American War... the Vietnam guys don't sit around talking about the great battles we were in."

An age gap contributes to the Vietnam Vets' lack of interest. "I wouldn't know what to talk about to those people who fought in World War II." In post after post, town after town, the Legion is kept barely breathing by handfuls of old men meeting in halls that once held hundreds. They are puzzled and disappointed that they cannot interest the young men. Teddy's Rough Riders in L.A., which had 1104 members after World War II now has 237, just three of them Vietnam vets.

While conceding that it grows weak in cities, Legion officials maintain that the organization remains strong and healthy in the small-town heartland of America. If so, a visitor cannot discern it readily. In post after post, attempts to lure the young meet with failure.

In Crooksville, Ohio, a Legionnaire remembered with chagrin his first effort to recruit Viet vets on a "Vietnam night" with a fish fry and beer. About 25 men were contacted. One showed up.

Beyond the generation gap and the controversial nature of the Vietnam war lie other reasons for the Legion's decline. It is being pressed hard by the second-largest veterans' organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW has recruited more Viet vets than the Legion--its total strength, 1.6 million, now approaches that of the American Legion--despite stiffer membership qualifications.

Despite this built-in elitism--different political leanings far from liberal --the VFW's top leadership is more in step with the Democratic Party while the Legion is more oriented to conservative Republicanism.

Is the Legion simply an anachronism, an echo from the past left far behind? There are many signs that it has lost its vigor.

The 1937 National Convention was marked by a 17-hour-long parade cheered by 2.5 million. When the Legion convened in 1970 in Portland, Oregon, it went almost unnoticed except for about a thousand anti-war counter marchers who burned flags and shouted obscenities at the aging Legionnaires.

Waning power has not gone unnoticed in Washington. The Legion had a great deal to do with drafting, guiding through Congress and setting up administrative machinery for the G.I. Bill of Rights and still regards this as its greatest triumph. Today it carries little weight and works softly in the halls of Congress. The Legion's national adjutant, William Hauck, insists that the Legion is still influential but it lacks an issue.

Liberals within the Legion talk of a stirring of Legion interest in current issues such as ecology and birth control. It is expected that they will admit members who served in the armed forces during peace time.

In the meantime, men like Steve Boyko of Teddy's Rough Riders who hasn't missed an American Legion meeting in 25 years, still wait for the young men to come in and take over, still remain confident that there will be a meeting of different generations.

"They'll be coming later on, as soon as they get their families established; we'll soon be getting together."

"Years from now, the bitterness will be a little dulled. They'll be coming in droves."

The following is a verbatim* statement of the National Commander of the American Legion when appearing before a Congressional hearing on amnesty. Read it carefully. The closely reasoned argument presented will be important in discussions of the issue of amnesty.

STATEMENT OF JOHN H. GEIGER
NATIONAL COMMANDER, THE AMERICAN LEGION
before
Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and
Procedure Committee on the Judiciary United
States Senate
March 1, 1972

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am appearing here today at your invitation to present the views of the American Legion on the question of executive clemency for those who have failed to comply with the statutory and regulatory requirements of the Selective Service Act and those who have deserted from military service during the Vietnam War. You and the members of this subcommittee are to be commended for your efforts to develop information on this complex subject.

As National Commander, I am pleased that so many members of the Subcommittee are veterans and members of The American Legion and are aware of our interest in defense and military matters. For the record, our current membership exceeds 2,700,000 honorably discharged former servicemen and women of World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. With the exception of World War II, the largest segment of our current members, some half million, base their eligibility on Vietnam era service.

While the reasons for belonging to our organization are many and varied, all of our members have a concern for our nation's well being, particularly in the area of national defense. This concern has, from the Legion's beginning in 1919 following World War I, manifested itself in the resolutions annually adopted at its National Conventions.

Today my appearance and the position I take on amnesty are based upon Resolution 207 adopted by our 1971 National Convention. A copy of this resolu-

*verbatim - in exactly the same words.

tion is appended to this statement and I respectfully request that it be made a part of the official records of these hearings. The delegates who unanimously adopted Resolution 207 represented every one of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. They were all honorably discharged veterans of wartime services, and represented a cross section of American ethnic, cultural, political and economic life. Resolution 207 also has the unanimous support of the American Legion Auxiliary whose nearly one million members are the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of men who served their nation.

Like you, we Legionnaires are deeply concerned over the complex problems presented by the issue of amnesty. It is an emotional problem with overtones of justice tempered with mercy and understanding. Amnesty is particularly difficult to consider today because of the profound and bitter division in our land over the Vietnam conflict.

It was our longest war--and like the Revolutionary, Mexican and Civil Wars--a bitterly divisive one. A large number of our young men are involved in the amnesty question--though far more were involved in this question in the Civil War.

Today, our Vietnam casualties far outnumber our draft evaders. Over 70,000 by unofficial estimate are either military deserters or selective service evaders. For many, their excuse is the immorality of the participation of the United States in the conflict in Vietnam. Canada, Sweden, and, to a much lesser extent, other countries have given these young men asylum. Their cause is now being popularized and propagandized by many and diverse groups in the United States and abroad--including several candidates for high public office in our own country. Let us hope that as a result of these hearings, earnest and full consideration will be given to all facets of the issue of executive clemency so that we shall be able to discover and follow that difficult line between the dictates of the law and the charity our moral heritage demands.

The American Legion has an intense and direct interest in amnesty because of the fact that its members all were subject to the laws, regulations, pressures, and responsibilities of military service in defense of the United States and most also were subject to the operation of the Selective Service System.

We believe that we have a real and vital stake in this issue since it concerns basically the rights and responsibilities of the citizen to bear arms in defense of his nation. In 1783, General George Washington expressed clearly the responsibility of citizenship which I believe goes to the heart of the proposition under discussion. Washington said:

> It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a free Government, owes not only a portion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it.

The American Legion was formed to help insure that these rights and responsibilities were carried out in civilian life by those comrades who have borne them in time of war.

Proponents of amnesty at the present time fall into two categories. One group advocates unconditional amnesty for all military deserters and draft evaders. This group reasons that the Vietnam conflict is an immoral war for the United States; that those who recognized this and followed their consciences ought not to suffer any legal penalties for being right while their country was wrong; and, therefore, amnesty should be a blanket recognition of this.

Some spokesmen for this view go so far as to advocate full veterans' rights and pensions for deserters and draft evaders for their sufferings in Canada, Sweden and elsewhere. The second group of proponents offer amnesty to draft evaders but not to military deserters, provided that draft evaders prove their sincerity by performing alternate service for their country.

The American Legion believes that most draft evaders and deserters consciously decided to refuse to accept their responsibilities as citizens under the law; that they evaded their responsibilities by flouting our laws and legal remedies rather than by going through the available, legal channels of redress;* that their actions in declining to obey certain laws distasteful to them is contrary to sound legal and moral standards; and that the obligations of citizenship cannot be applied to some and evaded by others.

The American Legion resolved that: "We go on record as opposing any attempt to grant amnesty or freedom from prosecution to those men who either by illegally avoiding the draft or desertion from the armed forces failed to fulfill their military obligation to the United States."

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*redress - the setting right of what is wrong.

In other words, we of The American Legion first believe that giving any wholesale amnesty--whether conditional or unconditional--would make a mockery of the sacrifices of those men who did their duty, assumed their responsibilities in time of conflict, and--in many cases--were killed, seriously wounded, or now lie in a prison camp somewhere in Indochina. Over 50,000 men have paid the supreme price of patriotism and citizenship. Another 302,602 have been wounded or injured. Over 1,600 are prisoners or missing in action in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia. And the casualties have not ended.

How can any general amnesty be explained to these men? How can amensty be explained to parents, wives, children--all those who have lost a son, husband or a father in their country's service? How can we excuse ourselves to the prisoners of war, the missing in action, or to their suffering families for offering amnesty?

Furthermore, what would be the effect on the morale of our Armed Forces if amnesty were granted to those who have violated the law and their oath of service by turning their backs and fleeing their country? In our opinion, it could only badly undermine that morale and cheapen the value of honorable service to one's country--at the very moment these values are most in need of strengthening.

Amnesty might even be the last bitter pill to our servicemen now caught in a web of confusion and held in disdain by those who hate the war and would do anything to drive us out of it in dishonor, including destroying our armed forces on the field of battle, and their spirit.

Our men are fighting the enemy, they are fighting dangerous drugs, they are fighting hatred and misunderstanding at home, they are coping with racial problems and the problems involved in a transitional period in military life and discipline. We cannot afford to add the issue of a general amnesty to those problems at this time.

It is clear from the Legion's resolution that our official opposition to amnesty is not a total opposition to it, but an opposition to any sort of amnesty to all draft evaders as a class. Our resolution asks that all draft evaders be prosecuted. This means that we would like each case to be heard in court, and tried on its merits. The courts can deal with the particulars of each case and

exercise leniency or sternness, based on the actual facts brought out in hearings about each particular draft evader. Surely the courts will find those who are innocent, and who should be excused without any further conditions.

It is also implicit in our resolution that those found guilty would still have open to them the right of appeal. Should appeal fail they would have recourse to the President's pardoning power if, on review of the facts in each case, he wished to extend additional leniency beyond what the courts may extend. This is implicit in our resolution, because any request for prosecution implies not only the possible finding of guilt but the finding of innocence, and the avenue for redress, appeal and pardon are available to all persons who are prosecuted.

Our request that draft evaders be prosecuted does not deny to them their full rights under the law, or the opportunity for executive clemency. Our resolution, in effect opposes any form of blanket amnesty, and asks that each case be considered on its merits. The only other example in our history of amnesty for wartime draft evaders certainly bears out the wisdom of this approach--and, of course, it is consistent with the whole American system of justice which is based on hearing the charges and the facts of each case.

After World War II, the Roberts Board tried to treat all 15,805 World War II draft evaders the same, as all proposals for blanket amnesty do. The Board threw up its hands at the injustice of any such operation. It found sinners of all degrees, as well as innocent men, among the World War II draft evaders. In the end, with the aid of the Justice Department staff, it reviewed each case. That was not the easy way out, but the Roberts Board shouldered the huge job of review rather than accept the onus* of dispensing justice by the shovelful.

There are some in this country who would create the illusion that every Vietnam draft dodger was acting on high principle out of deep-seated convictions against war. When all cases were judged individually by the Roberts Board after World War II, nearly half were found to have been men wanted for murder, robbery, desertion of their families and other serious crimes.

On the other hand, others were found to have been legally exempt from military service, or they fell afoul of the law through ignorance or illiteracy. President Truman gave a complete pardon to 1,523 and a conditional one to 1,518, while more than 12,000 did not merit such treatment.

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*onus - burden; responsibility.

If the Vietnam draft evaders are all prosecuted, courts will be able to judge each case on its merits. They will again find a mixture of victims of error, deliberate conspirators, and professional criminals. The president could then have them screened and consider recommendations for clemency in each case.

An Act of Congress to provide an across-the-board three-year stint of government service in exchange for amnesty would offer that penance to some for whom it is too heavy a penalty and to others for whom it is too mild a punishment. The most flagrant offenders will get the best break and the least offenders the worst. This is hardly equal justice under the law. At least ten Presidents, from Washington to Truman, have handled the amnesty under existing machinery. An Act of Congress that decides all cases without a hearing is neither necessary nor desirable.

There was no amnesty granted after the Korean War. It is therefore clear that amnesty has not been lightly given by our modern American presidents. And it has been granted only after the shooting has stopped and the war is over.

Lastly, an argument much used by advocates of unconditional general amnesty is that the Vietnam conflict is immoral, therefore, no American should be prosecuted or punished for refusing to take part in any direct or indirect way in an immoral war. I am not aware of the precise moral standards used by those who would label our military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam "immoral."

And the assumption that the Vietnam conflict is now, or was from the beginning, an immoral war is much in dispute. We Legionnaires reject the simplistic labeling of our effort in Vietnam as immoral.

We reject it on the grounds that such allegations are patently false. The United States' commitment to the government and people of South Vietnam is just and moral--we are committed to providing South Vietnam the means whereby it can defend its independence and its right of self-determination.

Our involvement in Vietnam was authorized under proper Constitutional procedures and was sustained by the Congress.

The Viet Cong were committing genocide in South Vietnam at the time we became heavily involved in that conflict--systematically slaughtering innocent civilians wholesale as a means to gaining political control. We knew this then, and we know it now. Everyone within sound of my words knows it. But when discussion of

the morality of the Vietnam war arises today, the fact that we intervened against genocide, when the United Nations would not, is simply omitted from the discussion. One cannot admit it and still define our role in Vietnam as immoral. We hope and believe that the Congress will not decide such a moral question by closing its eyes to genocide.

We cannot believe that the Congress will ever decide that those who violated the law have the superior moral position to the President, the Congress, and to the men who served.

If Congress should decide that they do, we wonder who next will take up the pretext and use the precedent to claim a moral superiority over some fresh enactments of the Congress.

We wonder what future legal dilemmas will be in store for us if we create such an extraordinary precedent as the Congress assenting to the right of citizens to determine unilaterally which laws they will obey.

Any determination of amnesty based on the moral superiority of draft law violators is contrary to our concept of justice. Historically, the Congress, the President and the Judiciary have struggled to determine the extent of power of each. Should we now add a new dimension to this three-sided struggle--namely, any citizen who claims that his unilateral view of morality is superior to the Congress, the courts and the President alike? If we establish this as a correct view, the day will arrive when there will be little further use for the president, the courts or the Congress.

In summary, The American Legion's position on amnesty is:

1) It opposes any attempt to grant amnesty now.

2) After the conflict ends, peace is established, and our prisoners of war and missing in action have been repatriated or accounted for, each case should be reviewed under existing procedures available to the courts and the President.

CHAPTER 6

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

"Friends" is a way of referring to Quakers, a religious group. As their preamble states, the Friends Committee on National Legislation "is composed of Friends who feel a concern as Christians and as seekers after truth that the social, economic and political aspects of life be conducted in love and justice." They believe that all men are brothers, that God's love extends to all creation, and that every person is endowed with worth and dignity.

From reading the following excerpts from the preamble and introduction to FCNL's Statement of Legislative Policy, what kinds of positions do you think would be taken on proposed legislation?

> "Governments make decisions which result in war and peace, justice and injustice. Mankind's religious heritage and revelation should be brought to bear upon these decisions."
>
> "In our representative form of government all of us as citizens share responsibility for the decisions and actions of our government at both the international and domestic levels. Although morality and goodness cannot be legislated as such, the human administration of just laws can help provide a favorable climate for their development."
>
> "The ideals of brotherhood, love, justice and social concern embodied in the principles of the Religious Society of Friends and other worshiping communities are, we believe, standards essential for human welfare and even the survival of human civilization."

The Friends Committee on National Legislation has approximately 200 members, two-thirds of whom are appointed by some Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends in the United States, the other one-third can be Friends appointed at large.

This Committee makes very clear in all testimony before Congressional committees that it does not speak for all Friends. They recognize that differences of opinion exist on specific issues. The religious organization is not adapted to issuing official statements for the group as a whole.

Even though they are a small organization, they hope to work with others both in and out of government; they attempt to interpret their view of the moral and spiritual values which should underlie government and law.

> "The Committee does not believe in 'pressure' in the sense of coercion. Rather, we encourage Friends to share what God leads them to believe is right on questions at issue, and ask Members of Congress and others in government to help by specific actions, if they are so led."

The above statements are worded in a very general manner. The following material reveals more about the beliefs of Friends.

> "What we seek is a society in the United States and the world based on (1) belief in, and practice of, unselfish brotherhood, equal dignity, and full participation for all persons; (2) a life voluntarily limiting consumption to actual needs, enriched by the enjoyment of the beauty of art and nature, human fellowship and love, and helpfulness to others; (3) responsible domestic and world citizenship; (4) private and governmental organizations which are effective instruments for good-will, liberty, equality, opportunity, and justice.
>
> "This means quality of life at the center of society, rather than quantity of material things--a quality of life based on respect and affection for each person as an infinitely valuable child of God, and practices and institutions consistent with this underlying attitude. It means cooperation, not destructive competition, it means non-violent building of peace and justice, not a war system."

Now let us examine the specific beliefs of this group. Its statement about wiretapping reads: "We oppose wiretapping and other secret interception of communication." Their view about amnesty states "We urge amnesty for those who, because of conscientious objection to war, or wartime military service, have been convicted or have served sentences for violation of the Selective Service Law, or have deserted, or have fled the country in order to avoid involvement in war."

In the section entitled "Making Representative Government Work," it is stated: Much needs to be done to encourage efficiency in government, to avoid waste and duplication, to foster honor and integrity, to provide for proper information and disclosure and to develop codes of ethics. Congress should: (among other things) change the status of Committee Chairmen in both houses, either by having them chosen on a basis other than seniority, or by giving a majority of the Committee greater freedom of action, or both.

In the FCNL newsletter (October, 1971) entitled "Roadblocks to Effective Congressional Action," a section deals with the seniority system. It points out that in the 91st Congress, 13 House chairmen were from rural districts, 2 from suburban, and 6 from urban districts. Yet almost 3 out of 4 Americans live in urban areas. Thus a situation prevails where 2/3 of the real power in the House is accountable to only 1/4 of the American public, the rural portion. In the House there are not only "stacked" committees representing special interests and unrepresentative of the whole House, but also committees that spend much money, yet do little work.

The newsletters keep subscribers informed of pending legislation and urge the readers to become involved in local issues and bring pressure on their representatives to vote according to their wishes.

The Beginnings of the FCNL

In 1943, during World War I, a diverse group of American Quakers met in Indiana to create the Friends Committee on National Legislation. They felt that "Friends have a responsibility to contribute as best we may to the shaping of wise and right legislation in those areas in which our principles and the causes we believe in are most closely affected."

So the FCNL opened its doors in Washington, D. C. as the first full-time year-round Protestant committee concentrating on legislative questions. This was the first unified attempt by Friends to influence their national government since the early days in England.

The organizing conferences said that "These critical times are bringing home to us acutely the sweeping role which government is playing in the shaping of life, both national and international."

The FCNL is the only religious group in Washington registered as a lobby. Since its beginning it has emphasized the need for positive change. It understands the vital relationship between religion, and politics and government. It believes that a joining of "technical competence" with religious values is of crucial importance.

A few of many accomplishments of the FCNL:

1. The FCNL headed an eight-year campaign which brought Congressional defeat in 1952 of Universal Military Training in the United States. The fight against conscription* has continued through lobbying efforts and through support for such groups as the National Council to Repeal the Draft.

2. It has sought to make major cuts in military spending. It has helped to create a public awareness of the extremely high costs of military policies and hardware.

3. The FCNL spearheaded work toward passage of amendments to the 1956 farm bill under which the American government has given food and paid the costs of distribution of commodities* abroad by voluntary organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee and CARE.

4. The FCNL is trying to turn U. S. foreign policy around: from one organized for war to one organized for peace under just law in the world. It was one of the original supporters for the Peace Corps and pressed for U. S. funding of United Nations development programs.

5. The FCNL has worked for more than twenty years to normalize U. S. relations with mainland China and the Soviet Union.

6. It has provided leadership in efforts to end the Indochina war.

7. In the area of civil liberties, it initiated the National Citizens Conference on Civil Liberties in 1948, attended by more than fifty diverse groups.

8. Its many other efforts include: forming coalitions with other groups, testifying before Congressional committees, interviewing members of Congress and daily intensive research on legislative matters.

One Representative said, "If we could have more groups like this with the same kind of attitude making their appeal to reason more than passion, the whole legislative atmosphere on Capitol Hill would be improved."

In its efforts to get their ideas across the FCNL is well aware of the importance of public opinion and its expression. It publishes for distribution a series of "how to" pamphlets.

1. How to Write a Letter to the Editor
2. How to Work in Politics
3. How to Visit Your Congressman

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*conscription - a compulsory enrollment of men or women into the armed forces.
*commodities - supplies.

4. How to Write your Congressman and the President

5. How to Work for the Congressional Candidate of Your Choice.

Who does all this work of the FCNL? Would you believe the lobbyists and a staff of fifteen? Their annual 1973 budget was $225,000. The breakdown of expenses looked like this:

Staff salaries	$162,600
Travel and services	11,500
Telephone & telegraph	4,000
Postage	7,650
Rent & Overhead	16,450
Research & resource mtls	1,300
Printing	5,300
Newsletter	8,700
Computer	6,000
Contributions & Conf	1,500
General operations budget	$225,000

FCNL STATEMENT ON AMNESTY

(Approved by the General Committee, February 21, 1972)

Friends have long realized the wounds of war are sustained by both combatants and non-combatants. A nation suffers because of the moral burden warfare thrusts on the individual and his conscience. The moral and religious dilemmas posed by war and conscription result in an additional casualty list.

The war in Indochina is increasingly recognized by Americans as immoral, illegal and unjust, carried on in violation of the United Nations Charter and the United States Constitution. Our first priority remains to stop the killing in Indochina.

The Nuremberg principles, supported by the United States, the USSR, France and Great Britain and subsequently approved by the United Nations, emphasize that final responsibility for participation in morally reprehensible acts against humanity rests with the individual.

We believe most persons who have refused to participate in military service or have opposed conscription during the course of the war in Indochina have done so on the ground that they were conscientiously opposed to the war or wartime military service. However, proof of conscience is inherently difficult, and experience has proved that efforts to judge conscientiousness have been marked

all too often by refusals to recognize sincere beliefs. We therefore urge that all persons who have refused military service or conscription should not be punished for such refusal, whether it took place before, during, or after military service.

We urge the President and Congress, in a spirit of reconciliation, to join in a full and unconditional amnesty for all those who are deemed to have violated U. S. laws in this regard. Thus, the government should: (1) permit the return of those now outside the United States, either to stay or to visit; (2) provide for prompt release of all currently held in civilian or military prisons; (3) drop pending and potential prosecutions; and (4) restore civil rights to all who have completed prison terms or otherwise lost such rights due to their opposition to the war.

A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FCNL STAFF MEMBER:

PETER KAPENGA

9:00 The day began with a speech to an Iowa high school group at the Bellvue Hotel. They were in town to learn more about the Middle East crisis, and I had been asked to make a few comments on the Quaker view of the problem. Students seemed to expect a speech; and were more than pleased when I limited myself to a few introductory comments and opened the session to a discussion. Apparently they had had their fill of speeches. As the group relaxed in the more informal atmosphere, the questions picked up and every answer brought out more questions. The hour went much too rapidly and ended with the announcement that the bus was ready to take them to their next appointment. Wish I could have stayed with the group, but no time. There was much to do at the office.

10:30 Desk was piled high with letters and Congressional Records.* The Congressional Records could wait; saved for the spare moment when they could be read and relevant debates marked to be clipped for the library file. The letters had to be answered immediately. One asked for information on the C-5A aircraft, a second asked what Congress was doing about the Bangladesh crisis, and a third wondered what was happening to the Amnesty Bill. Thank goodness I didn't need to do much research; the letters were finished in no time.

12:30 Lunch time. Peanut butter, raisins, and honey. Great meal! Several of the staff were in the dining room. Conversation centered on a new mailing being prepared and volunteers were needed. Not me! I'm swamped with work!

1:30 Ran over to the House Office Buildings for the MidEast hearings. Arrived in the midst of the presentation of a Muslim religious leader.

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*Congressional Record - written accounts of sessions of both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

He was followed by a Rabbi and then a Catholic priest. Each made brief statements of the importance of Jerusalem to their religious faiths. Fascinating! Was able to obtain copies of their testimonies for my file. Following their statements, three of the Congressmen asked extensive questions and I got several pages of notes.

4:30 Returned to the office by way of the House document room, picking up several copies of House hearings for the library. Spent the last hour straightening up desk and talking with a fellow lobbyist. Reviewed plans for the next several days. A conference on the Bangladesh issue to inform the various non-governmental agencies in Washington was in the making. Must think about it and prepare a brief FCNL statement. A college group was planning to visit the capitol--they wanted someone to make appointments with their representatives for them. More to think about. It all could wait for tomorrow. I'm tired.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

In order to draw some conclusions from the material included in this curriculum unit it will be necessary to review some of the main points of each chapter.

Hopefully you will have discussed the conflicting points of view which were presented to demonstrate that the various voluntary associations attract people of different persuasions. You may have also noticed that the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, The American Legion and the Friends Committee on National Legislation are all nonpartisan groups. Democrats, Republicans and Independents join these organizations because they believe in their programs.

In the introduction we read about political participation, power, and learned that the purpose of this unit was to examine some voluntary associations to see how they took positions on certain issues as reforming Congress, and amnesty and how they work to effect governmental policies.

Voluntary associations have been part of American life since the colonial period. They act as a safety-valve on American politics because the extremists bear the burden of convincing the moderate majority of the wisdom of the changes they wish to make in our society. By the time some of the ideas of the extremist are taken into the mainstream they are diluted so as to not be very extreme. The government tolerates extreme political groups because to suppress them would be against the American tradition of freedom.

The League of Women Voters is presented as a large organization whose approach is to educate its members about specific issues it chooses to study each year. They take positions through consensus and act as a watchdog at government proceedings at all levels. The league is particularly interested in improving local governments, the courts and in providing opportunities to interested persons to participate actively in the political process.

The American Legion attracts a different membership; since it actively recruits veterans of American wars, the Legion is still very effective in all legislation pertaining to veterans, but its effectiveness as a pressure group in other areas is somewhat diminished. Its lessening impact on American life is seen as a result of changing values and attitudes of the general public.

On the other hand, Common Cause is a citizen's lobby group on the rise. Its membership is increasing as is its influence in Washington and across the nation. It too monitors the operations of Congress and many of the Federal agencies, and we have noted its aims in the area of Congressional reform. Voluntary associations which affect the political process often have a period of great power and influence, but usually that influence diminishes as other groups seize the initiative and get greater public support.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation is a small association compared to the others. It too takes positions on the issues of Congressional reform and amnesty. But the moral influence of the Quaker is out of proportion to their number. This was particularly true during the Vietnam War.

It is hoped that the information provided herein will enable the student to draw some conclusions about the operations of these groups, its negative and positive aspects. Perhaps they will become more effective members of groups they join because they will be better equipped to analyze their purposes, operations and effectiveness.